



Foster Parent Spotlight

Dan and Lori O'Brien

Dan and Lori O'Brien live in Brookfield and have been foster parents for about ten years. Dan is a full-time mechanic and Lori works part-time nights as a home care nurse. The O'Brien's have three biological children - a twenty-one-year-old daughter, a nineteen-year-old son and a seven-teen-year-old daughter. In addition, the family also has four adopted children ranging in ages from twenty to ten years old, two dogs, four cats and they also have their fifteen-year-old nephew residing with them. At this time, the O'Brien's have three foster children living with them - a



sibling group that ranges in ages from nine to five years old. Needless to say, Dan and Lori definitely have their hands full! The couple has been married for twenty-two years and states that in their "free time" they love to go camping and take family vacations together. Lori feels the most difficult thing in foster care is seeing shattered lives and the fears of children, however, she also feels that one of the most rewarding things in foster care is having the ability to mend

We Need You!

For more information about becoming a foster parent in Waukesha County, please contact Shari Rather at:

srather@waukeshacounty.gov
262-548-7267 or visit our website at
www. waukeshacounty.gov and follow the links to foster care.

the shattered lives. When asked to offer their "words of wisdom" from their decade experience as foster parents, the O'Brien's offered the advice to have faith in God and treat each child that comes through your door as your own. Thank you so much Dan and Lori for your time, love and commitment for all these years!

Recommended Reading for Foster Parents:

Time-In: When Time-Out Doesn't Work

by Jean Illsley Clarke

Editorial Reviews

From Parents' Choice®
The author of Self-Esteem: A Family Affair provides an easy-to-follow, four-part system for dealing with minor but persistent behavioral problems that resist traditional parenting tools. A 1999 Parents' Choice® Approval. (Linda Geeson, Parents' Choice®)

Foreword Magazine, January 1999
"Clarke's "time-in" method seems so easy and commonsensical that many parents may be eager for their children to misbehave just to get a chance to try it out."

The Midwest Book, April 1999
"Time-In is an essential addition to any personal or community library parenting or child-care reference collection."

From the Back Cover
Time-In: When Time-Out Doesn't Work is for every parent who has felt frustrated, helpless, angry, or scared when traditional parenting tools don't work. Noted parent educator Jean Illsley Clarke offers new insight into what children desperately need with the adults in their lives: connection and trust.

About the Author
Jean Illsley Clarke, M.A., is a parent educator of international reputation. She is the author of Self-Esteem: A Family Affair and Growing Up Again. She has received many awards for her revolutionary contributions to parents and families. She and her husband live in Minnesota with their children and grandchildren nearby.

Product Description:
Parents who wish to handle discipline problems in firm and loving ways need tools. Time-In is a practical process that teaches children how to be competent, to think, and to succeed. It uses four tools, Ask, Act, Attend, and Amend, which fit together like interchangeable puzzle pieces. Time-In addresses discipline and misbehavior while strengthening the connection the child has with the parent or teacher.

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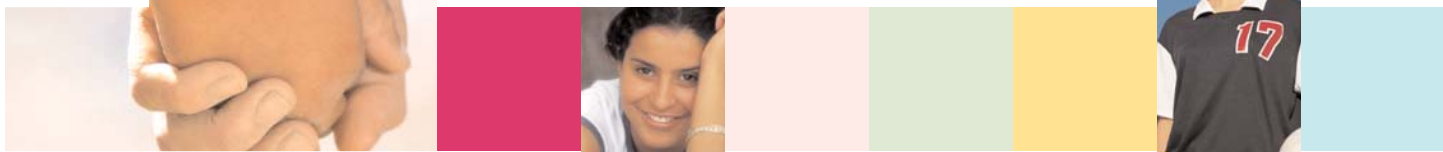
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Waukesha County

Foster Care Forum

Need A Break, Prepare for Respite Care

by Carrie Craft
source: <http://adoption.about.com>

Respite is a much needed service for fostering families. It allows foster parents to take a break, which helps prevent burn out. Respite can offer birth children of the foster home quality time with their parents. It also gives the foster children a break. Hopefully, the foster children will be spending a weekend with other foster children, children they can relate to.

A poorly planned respite weekend can cause more stress for everyone involved: foster family, respite provider, and the foster children. Here are some tips for having a successful respite weekend; Contact your worker well in advance of your respite date so he/she can have adequate time to find a respite family for you. Two weeks advance notice is usually a good amount of time to give. If you find your own respite provider, let the social worker know who you have chosen and get it approved. Do your foster children know the respite family? To avoid the trauma of the children staying with strangers, try to have a visit with the respite family beforehand. Sometimes this is not possible especially in emergency cases, but highly recommended.

Packing for Respite Care

When packing for your foster children, be sure to include enough clean clothes. Don't forget extra underwear and socks. For infants and toddlers too many diapers and wipes are better than not enough. It would not be fair if the respite provider had to go purchase more items because they were not given a supply sufficient to get through the weekend.

Have the children pick out a special toy or stuffed animal to help them at bed time. Put together a small scrapbook. The kind with pages that you just slip the pictures into would be easiest to prepare. Include pictures of birth family, foster family, friends and pets.

Setting it Up

When contacting the respite family make sure to clarify the drop off and pick up dates. I have done respite for a foster family in the past, and we once had a major misunderstanding on the pick up date. This caused confusion and stress for both myself and the foster family, as they had to pick up their foster children a day ahead of their planned schedule. Not a good way to end a restful weekend.

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Winter 2005
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Happy Holidays
from the Waukesha County
Department of Health & Human Services!

Waukesha County Foster Care Forum is published monthly by the Department of Health and Human Services. Please send your ideas and suggestions to:

srather@waukeshacounty.gov
500 Riverview Ave. in Waukesha 53188

Respite... continued

During your first phone contact, don't forget to mention any appointments or visits to the respite provider. It would be extremely unfair to spring this information on them at the last minute. If they are unable to make these appointments, you may choose to look for another provider, or speak with your social worker on rescheduling the appointments.

If conflicting schedules mean that visits may be missed, it's in the birth family's best interest if another provider is searched out. If this is impossible, again, contact your social worker on rescheduling immediately. Visits are the heart of the reunification process.

Make a respite packet.

This is something you only have to make once! I usually use a large zip lock baggy. Type or clearly write a list of needed information. Include the children's full names, birth dates, your name and numbers, the social worker's name and number, Dr.'s name and number, and an emergency contact number for where you can be reached during the respite period.

It is also helpful to have a list of the daily schedule, fears, likes and dislikes of the children. This is especially helpful for babies and toddlers. Make sure to note any allergies, and of course, any appointments scheduled during this respite period. The packet also should include the child's medical card and "consent to treat" paperwork. Write out instructions for any medication, and include a medicine log so the respite provider can document when the medication was given. It's also helpful to add a copy of the child's latest physical.

When I need to use respite, I only have to add medication to the packet, update appointment information (if any) and the kids are ready to go. This packet also comes in handy when going to doctor or dental visits as all needed paperwork is ready.

Preparation is the key to a great respite weekend. You can come back to the children relaxed and ready to get back to work serving your community, providing homes for children, and helping families heal.

PACE TRAINING WINTER 2005

January 27, 2005
Teambuilding
6:00 to 9:00

January 29, 2005
Child Abuse and Neglect
8:30 to 11:30

January 29, 2005
Child Development
12:15 to 3:15

February 3, 2005
Attachment, Separation and Placement
6:00 to 9:00

February 10, 2005
Discipline & Behavior Management
6:00 to 9:00

February 12, 2005
Cultural Issues in Placement
8:30 to 11:30

February 12, 2005
Primary Families
12:15 to 3:15

February 17, 2005
Sexual Abuse
6:00 to 9:00

February 24, 2005
Effects of Caregiving on the Family
6:00 to 9:00

February 26, 2005
Permanency Issues for Children and Families
8:30 to 3:15

PLEASE CALL SHARI RATHER at
262-548-7267 TO REGISTER
ALL VETERAN
FOSTER PARENTS NEED TO HAVE THIS
TRAINING BY THEIR RENEWAL DATE

Advocating in School for the Children in Your Care

Schools are generally well-equipped to cope with the "average" child, one with no special problems. Children in foster or kinship care and those who have been adopted after being in care often do have difficulties in school. They may be behind academically, or have trouble getting along with teachers or other children, or be stuck in behavior patterns which make it hard for them to learn.

Part of your job as a resource parent is to make sure the school recognizes your child's academic challenges and takes some action to address them. Schools are required by law to provide certain kinds of services to meet special needs, but don't assume it will be done automatically. You may need to assume the role of advocate for your children to ensure that they receive the services to which they are entitled. Here are tips for helping you get your child's educational needs met:

Learn assertiveness skills. Assertiveness is an attitude and a set of relational skills that help you get what you want without being angry or aggressive. You may be able to find a short class in assertiveness skills through your local school district or community college. It's a great subject for in-service training—suggest that your agency or foster parent association develop and teach a course on it.

Within the limits of confidentiality rules, let your child's teacher know enough about the child's background to help him or her understand special problems. When information cannot be disclosed, stay focused on what the teacher needs to know to help the child in school. The details of an event in a child's life may not be as important as the effect the event is having.

Build a relationship with the child's teacher over time. Introduce yourself soon after the child is placed in the classroom, and talk regularly about how school is going—including what is going well. Don't wait until a major problem occurs.

Put the teacher in touch with the child's school history. If possible, help the teacher contact the child's former teacher and school to find out about academic status, strengths, challenges, and history.

Describe the ways that foster care placement impacts schooling. Help the teacher understand that children and youth in care tend not to perform as well in school as others; this is often due not to inability or a learning disability, but to school and family issues that make it difficult for the child to succeed. For example, the enormous emotional burden of grief, loss, and uncertainty about the future can impair a child's ability to concentrate and learn.

Help the teacher understand the impact of placement changes. Explain that each move a child makes can delay his or her academic level by months and that many children in foster care have a harder time learning because of what they have been through. Note also that some kids in care have experienced educational settings in which they were not supported well because they were seen as transient students bound to be moved again.

Support efforts to help the child experience success. Help the teacher structure materials and tasks in the classroom to help the child achieve success in some areas, even if academics are a problem. For example, the teacher can foster a sense of competence by giving the child responsibility for feeding an animal, watering plants, or passing out supplies.

Share written resources. If you have any books that depict foster, adoptive, and relative caregiving families, share them with the teacher. This can broaden the diversity of families to which all the children in the classroom are exposed.

Understand that your child may not be able to complete certain assignments. For example, constructing a family tree or bringing in a baby picture can be impossible for a child who has been frequently and suddenly moved, suffered neglect, or has little contact with birth family. Similarly, getting permission for a special activity such as a field trip can be problematic if you do not have the legal authority to give permission for the child. Make sure the teacher understands these issues.

Be constructive and respectful. Some teachers may feel challenged by highly involved resource parents who advocate very strongly for the children in their care. Be respectful of the teacher's position and understanding of the fact that there are perhaps 20 to 30 other children in the room, many of whom have their own problems. When you ask for something, find ways to offer help in providing it. Let the teacher see you as a resource, not as someone who is only asking for things. Share information about education and foster care with the teacher.

Originally published by the Casey Family Programs National Center for Resource Family Support. Currently available from the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning.

